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Historical patterns in ancient and contemporary migration phenomena in the Mediterranean area

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Abstract

This research study is focused on exploring the trends and correlations that exist in the immigration patterns among various societies in the world and especially in the European cultures. The migration period contributed significantly to the beginning of the medieval and modern Europe in the Mediterranean world, hitherto dominated by the Roman Empire and by the vestiges of other, more ancient cultures. The rise and fall of the Roman Empire can be well depicted by the changes in population, which is not known exactly but could be estimated with reasonable precision. Present Europe faces a similar crisis caused by a great tide of migration across the world, including Europe. This article will further analyze the historical, recent population and migration databases on the clusters of immigration patterns to see if there is any meaningful analogy in the two phenomena separated by about two millennia. Our first question is whether can these movements be attributed to purely physical, especially economic factors and population forces or do they have to do with the mental and psychical states of the dominant societies of the time. The next question is whether there are any recognizable patterns in history, in the dynamics of society. By recognizing patterns we hope to stimulate discussion on the multidisciplinary approach to history, cultural typology, and semi-quantitative diachronic study of social phenomena.

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1. Introduction

In this paper we investigate briefly the phenomena of migration in the Mediterranean in two historical settings two millennia apart. First we briefly investigate available population data then we try to find meaningful analogies between the data using Arnold Toynbee's scheme [1] and related models to be discussed later for the development of individual civilizations and societies and finally we address the question of possible regularities in history. Toynbee has tried to describe and partly explain the fates of individual civilizations in terms of the "challenge and response" model. According to this model, civilizations in their growing period successfully solve problems which are first usually physical in nature, but later become rather spiritual and societal thus generating awe and inspiration in the societies around them. Two chapters of Ref [1] are devoted to the breakdown and disintegration of civilizations which are due to loss of command over the physical and/or human environment, giving rise to a series of disadvantageous social and political phenomena: the hitherto leading "creative" minorities become "dominant" ones, the diffuse borders between the civilization; which is transformed into a universal state, and its neighborhood become closed, rigid and defensive. The internal proletariat becomes alienated, while the external proletariat attacks the universal state. In the early phase of the universal state the administration and the army were well organized and can resist the pressure, but later it loses territory and finally collapses. In the late period the immigrants can become the emperors themselves. This model is highly relevant for us as both the Roman Empire in its late period and the present European Union can be well described as "Universal states" exposed to external pressure from immigrants.

Nowadays, especially in "postmodern" circles such models are not too popular. Many would reduce the description and explanation of migration to a combination of population dynamics, fertility, mortality, production and transport abilities. This is essentially the basis of the approach of e.g. Elvin [2] and Scheidel [3] in their research, when trying to compare the history of the Roman and Chinese Empires, the two largest "universal states" of the ancient period in a comparative manner, using population, economic and archaeological data. Turchin [4], a scientist working on the borderline of biology and social sciences also deals a lot with the general and concrete questions of economic and population dynamics of pre-modern societies.

2. The population patterns in the Roman Empire and in its neighborhood

Although not known exactly, there are reasonably good estimates for the population of the Roman Empire throughout its history. We will rely here on the data collected by Maddison [5] which is relatively well structured in terms of time and region. Table 1 shows the total estimated population of the Roman Empire according to [5] for a nearly 1000 year period, per region.

Table 1.Changes in the population of various major regions in the Roman Empire between 300 BC and AD 600. [5]

Time period	Population (million)					
	300 BC	200 BC	AD 1	AD 200	AD 400	AD 600
Europe total	17.2	19.0	22.8	25.6	20.7	15.4
Italy	4.5	5.0	7.0	7.0	5.0	3.5
Iberia	3.9	4.5	5.0	5.5	5.0	4.0
Gallia	3.8	4.4	5.8	7.5	5.8	4.5
Greece	2.8	2.5	2.0	2.0	1.5	0.8
Danubian countries	2.3	2.6	3.1	3.6	3.5	2.6
Asia total	7.0	7.8	9.3	10.0	8.4	7.1
Asia Minor	4.5	5.0	6.0	7.0	6.0	5.0
Syria	2.3	2.6	3.0	2.8	2.2	1.9
Cyprus	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Africa total	5.8	6.5	8.2	9.5	7.9	6.8
Egypt	3.5	4.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	3.0
Cyrene	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2
Maghreb	2.0	2.2	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.6

2.1. Patterns recognition

The tendency is clear: the total population increases until about AD 200, afterwards decreases to the level before the onset of growth, sometimes to even lower figures. It can be observed that the peak was reached earlier in Italy, the central area of the Empire, although the decline after AD 200 is also conspicuous. In Gallia the population maximum was achieved around AD 200, while Greece exhibited decline almost in the whole investigated period. The population change in Asia Minor was of decisive importance within Asia, where the population peak also appeared around AD 200. The African region also shows fairly similar pattern where Egypt, similarly to Italy, Gallia and Asia Minor goes through a maximum around AD 200. It should be noted that (after Italy) the richest regions in the early imperial period were Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and those parts of the Maghreb area which were close to Egypt, so their population reflected more closely the boom and bust periods of the whole Empire. An analysis [6] of the archaeological data between 300 BC and AD 400 also clearly shows the existence of an economic-demographic “golden age” around the beginning of the Christian era.

Although several good monographs are available on the history of ancient Asian peoples and empires demographic data of similar quality as in the case of the Roman Empire were not found, only some less detailed estimates [7]. Table 2 based on the data [7] shows the estimated population of the continents with some sub-division for Asia, where China and India are treated separately between 400 BC and AD 1000. If comparing with Table 1 it has been noted that the time-scale is somewhat different and that in Table 1 the Roman Empire is considered, with some parts belonging in Table 2 to Asia and Africa.

Table 2. Estimated changes in the population outside Europe between 400 BC and AD 1000 [7].

Date	Population (million)							
	400 BC	200 BC	0	AD 200	AD 400	AD 600	AD 800	AD 1000
China	27	42	51	60.8	51.3	46	50.6	61.0
India	24	31.5	35.7	41.8	47.5	52	63.8	79.5
Other Asia	21	34.5	30.6	28.5	32.3	48	39.6	45.0
Europe	18	27	30.6	36.1	32.3	26	28.6	37.1
Africa	7	10.5	17	17.1	19	20	28.6	31.8
Other	3	4.5	5.1	5.7	7.6	8	8.8	10.6
Total	100	150	170	190	190	200	220	265

Nevertheless this much can be said even from this brief outline:

- Asia was the main repository of humanity throughout the period spanning 400BC to 1000AD
- China similarly to the Roman Empire has gone through a maximum around AD 200 the second Han period
- India exhibited an inverse curve with a minimum around the beginning of the Christian Era
- Other Asia exhibits the minimum just around the peak time of the Roman Empire and China – which may well be partly due to the migration itself
- Europe which includes only a part of the Roman Empire shows decline after AD 200
- Africa exhibits growth almost throughout the whole period.

2.2. Immigration analysis

It is known that Europe on the Western Side of the Ural Mountain and Central Asia had a considerable population surplus [8]. According to our present understanding several tribes and peoples of the Migration Period roughly between AD 300 and 700 as Germans, Goths, Saxons, Huns, Vandals etc. came from this area [9]. The events leading to the population maximum in the Roman Empire around AD 200 are manifold and are probably inter-related. Turchin in his studies [10] finds a direct correlation between the increasing population and the degree of social unrest, which may result in civil wars and a decrease of population. Ashraf and Galor [11] tried to set up a much more complicated mathematical model on the relations between cultural diversity, assimilation and economic-

social results. In their opinion relative geographic protection helps the assimilation of immigrants, resulting in a certain degree of uniformity which supports the accumulation of material wealth. Too strong isolation, however, blocks the acceptance of foreign ideas, technologies, innovations; which may be a drawback in the long run. The fall of the Roman Empire has been analyzed by many including Gibbon [12], Spengler [13] and Toynbee [1]. In addition to material factors all three authors emphasized strongly psychological-spiritual factors which prevented the effective resistance to the “barbarian” invasion. The idea of the republican Rome eroded fast, fertility dwindled, and the ebb of birth could not be reversed even by the alimentary system allotting land and pension for war orphans. Childlessness is a curse of all aging civilizations where individual convenience and advantages are pursued. Lower population means less tax, weaker army which must be diluted by mercenaries or foreigners.

3. Immigration to Europe

According to a prediction of the Population Reference Bureau 2008 [14] the proportion of the population from the developed countries will continuously decrease in the world population until 2050. Figure 1 was compiled using the estimates on the expected populations in various regions between 2004 and 2050. From the comparison of the data, it turns out that the only region where decreasing population is forecasted is Europe. The next one is China with its 10% expected growth, which may be a consequence of drastic birth control. All other regions with the exception of Africa, where 100% increase is expected, exhibit 40-50% growth. It should be noted that the majority of the growth potential in the North American region is also due to migration, which increases the “non-WASP” (White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant) proportion of the society. This study deals, however, first of all with the Mediterranean region and its neighborhood. It is well known that how changes of population depend on mortality and age distribution [15]: in preindustrial societies a higher, but fluctuating birthrate is balanced by a high mortality rate and after a major economic development the decrease of mortality rate is only slowly followed by a decreasing birth rate, resulting in a transient population increase which usually stabilizes at a higher level.

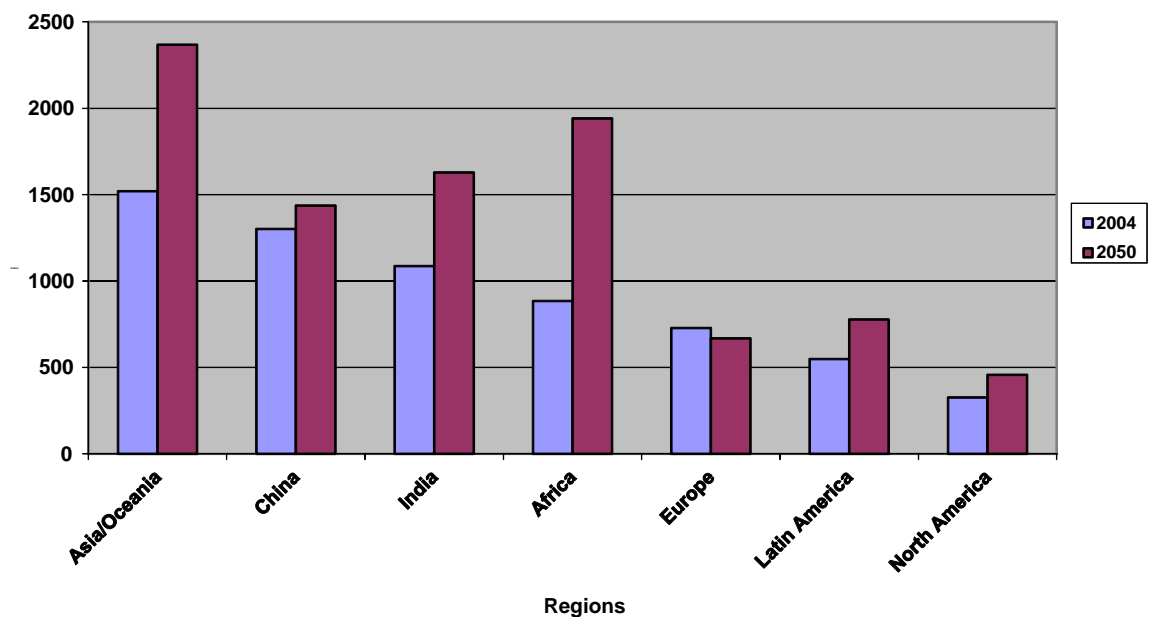


Fig. 1. Expected population changes between 2004 and 2050 based on the estimates of the Population Reference Bureau [14]

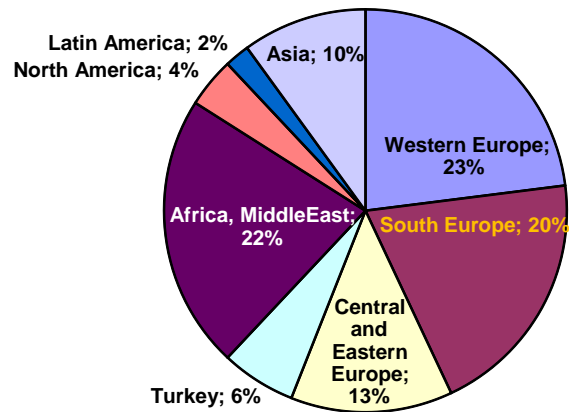


Fig. 2. Distribution of immigrants to the “old” Europe (former EU-15) per countries of origin according to a statistics from 2004 [17]

Presently Europe has to face the problems of an aging society, while fast growing regions elsewhere in the world have to face another problem: to give work and income to the younger generation not content with the living standards of their predecessors. According to an UN survey “World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision” [16] in the first half of the 21st century the main sending regions are Asia, Latin America and Africa, while the main receivers are Europe and North America. Of course these data do not contain data on migration *within* the global regions, which is significant.

If one looks at the distribution of the European migrants per countries of origin [17, 18] in figure 2 we can see that among the countries sending emigrants to the “old” Europe more than 50% belong to other European countries like west, south, central and eastern Europe. From the non-European regions of Africa and the near East represents much higher proportion than Asia, especially if we consider Turkey due to its dominant Islamic religion as a part of the near- East. This is understandable as the migration of the population of low income Asian countries is directed more at richer Asian countries, America or the petrol based economies of the Near East (Kuwait, Emirates etc.). This tendency is reinforced by the progressive aging of the Japanese and not much later of the Chinese societies. Europe has to face first of all immigration from Africa and from the Arabic countries.

3.1. Immigration data clusters

If one looks at the world map showing the proportion of young generations [19] in 2005 and 2025 (estimated) we will see that the North-African countries will move from the “hot” stage that is (i.e.), proportion of 30- generation > 60% to the “warm” stage i.e., 30- generation between 45-59 %, while from the sub-Saharan African countries only the south African Republic and Botswana will get to this category. Meanwhile a considerable part of Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece from the Mediterranean and practically whole Eastern and Central Europe from Germany to Ukraine) will get from the “lukewarm” position i.e., proportion of 30- generation between 30-44 % to the “cold” one i.e., proportion of 30- generation < 30 %. It can be thus expected that the “emission tendency” of the sub-Saharan African countries will last longer than that of the North-African Arabic countries, while the decreasing population in certain South and Central European countries will make immigration necessary. Table 3 is compiled from data dealing with the migration in the Near East [20] showing when the proportion of the 20-25 years generation will reach its maximum value. The same study warns us that the emigration tendencies from these countries will be further reinforced by desertification caused by climatic change.

Table 3. Time of expected peak of the 20-25 years generation in various North African and Near Eastern countries (Source: UNPD, World Population Prospects²⁰).

Year	Rather emigrant source	Rather receiving immigrants
2005	Morocco	
2010	Algeria, Iran, Tunisia	
2015	Lebanon	Bahrain
2020	Jordan, Turkey	
2025	Egypt	
>2030	Iraq, Mauritania, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Yemen	Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi-Arabia, United Arab Emirates

If we want to compare the expected immigration to the present Mediterranean from countries of Sub-Saharan Africa to that from Arabic (North-African) countries, we can again rely on the estimation of the UN [21] (see Figure 3). It can be seen that as serious sources of migration one can mention North-Africa and Western Africa. It can be assumed that from these regions more will target Europe. Desertification plays at least as important role in the Sub-Saharan migration as in the North African one [22]. East Africans move, as a rule towards the North, while Central Africans and West Africans towards the Western bank, perhaps from there to the North, but some venture even crossing the Sahara. From the Atlantic shore they go further to the Canary Islands, from Morocco to Spain, from Libya and Tunisia to Sicily, to the Italian mainland or to other Mediterranean islands.

4. Discussion and analysis

From the above study and research review, deductions of the future European generations in the form of graph are as:-

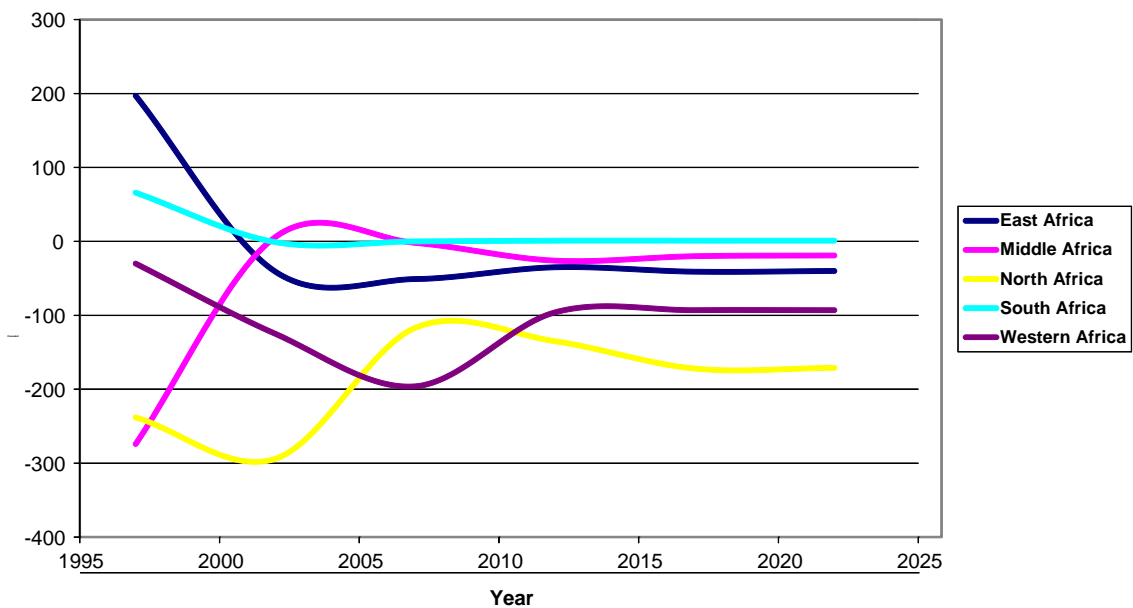


Fig. 3. Expected migration trends from various African regions. [21].

Migration to the EU by itself is almost unavoidable or could be prevented only by such a degree of deformation of the social-political system which could easily result in the end of the EU itself and would produce problems which are comparable in severity to those caused by migration. The rigor suggested instead of multiculturalism may be a temporary solution but if we look at the history of the Roman Empire we may venture to say that the success will be transient. Force requires army and for this also more children are needed, not only for tax payment. Anyway the “missing generation” which has not been born, can be hardly replaced fast by political decisions. It is a big question whether the fatigue of the European culture can be simply reversed by simple resolution, as this is not the result, rather the cause of the phenomena leading to large scale migration. Toynbee who has been referred to already in the beginning of this study [1] had something to say about this too. In his opinion neither archaism (looking back to the past to reconstruct and copy it) nor futurism (a quantum leap to the future) gives a solution. The solution comes if exceptional individuals or creative minorities withdraw from the everyday life of their environment to solve the problems.

According to the historical experience learning from history is possible for the individual but is a very rare phenomenon at the societal level – if exists at all. Many would reject with indignation even the attempt to look for historical analogies as described above, for various reasons. Some say that we look for such processes, analogies, patterns in history in vain as everything is individual and the goal of historical science is to reconstruct these individualities. Anyway we do see remarkable similarities between some phenomena in the late Roman Empire and our contemporary Atlantic/European history, from which migration is only one. These consequences are long term ones – the decline of the Roman Empire also lasted centuries. It does not mean that the individual has no choice and responsibility but that certain illusions should be given up and perhaps it is worth to convince others about the futility of these illusions. This activity is not without danger as people do not like if their illusions are destroyed, they may react aggressively. This aggression can be well detected in the rising nationalism and right wing movements of contemporary Europe, but this escapism does not slow down, rather hastens the conclusion, which is not necessarily liked by us.

5. Conclusions

In this study we have analyzed the immigration trends in the world as a whole and in Europe as specific. We have also identified patterns and clutters among the data. Analysis further focused on looking for patterns and analogies that they assume non-existent, personal or impersonal forces which influence historical events from behind; although these events are the results of individual decisions with unpredictable outcomes, so the future is not deterministic, but free. We do not assume, however, a kind of determinism which excludes the possibility of individual decisions, but look for regularities or patterns of social phenomena have their own dynamics which can be recognized and described allowing a certain degree of predictability. Such regularities are looked for by sociologists, social psychologists, cultural anthropologists; therefore there is no reason to exclude such a research as a legitimate goal from historical studies.

The mainstream of historical thinking, Toynbee [1] and Spengler already mentioned before there were others, such as Sorokin [20], Quigley and several others who sought for recognizable patterns in history. Some of these patterns seem to be cyclic in nature but Szmodis, drawing on the much earlier ideas of Maine [21]. Many others developed further the cultural cycle theory of Spengler and distinguished two kinds of societies: stagnant and progressive ones, of which only the second exhibits cyclic development and at the end of their history a kind of self-destruction. It should be noted that this is not a value judgment, rather a characteristic of the societies and their world-view. The European historical thought, always was tempted to see not only a linear development but also a kind of fulfillment, where after there is no qualitative change, only a gradual improvement. This was inherent in Hegel's work [23] but re-appeared also in some recent works; as evident from the famous book of Fukuyama [24] the “end of history”.

Few are the most important conclusions of this research study:

- Immigration due to certain demographic and economic tendencies is not only unavoidable, but to a certain degree is also necessary.

- A considerable portion of the immigrants come from cultures alien to the Europeans, and this proportion is expected to increase in the future.

The migrants usually stick to their original cultural identity which leads first to the formation of enclaves, later to segregation and finally to ghetto formation – especially if the later descendants of the first generation migrants can climb up neither in the labor market nor on the social ladder.

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